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Caught in the Web of Corruption: The Tribal Experience in Gopinath Mohanty's 'Paraja'

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Abstract

Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja* is a seminal tribal novel centered on the Paraja community of Odisha. Through the narrative of Sukru Jani and his children, the novel portrays the harsh realities and persistent hardships of tribal life. Their vulnerability, driven by illiteracy and subsistence-level living, makes them easy targets for exploitation by corrupt public officials and institutions operating in tribal regions. Rich in ethnographic detail, the novel captures the cultural practices and traditions of Odisha's tribal communities, while also exposing their systematic socio-economic marginalization. At its core, *Paraja* chronicles Sukru's struggle not only as an individual but also as a representative figure of the tribal populace whose family is eventually reduced to bonded labor (goti) under a local moneylender, or Sahukar. The novel unravels the role of a deeply flawed and complicit public machinery including the village headman, forest and revenue officers, and court officials in orchestrating Sukru's downfall. It also highlights the involvement of private actors like the Sahukar, who, with the aid of forged legal documents and the support of corrupt officials, dispossess tribal families of their land and autonomy.

Further, the novel sheds light on the exploitation of tribal women, who are often subjected to patriarchal abuse by figures such as the Sahukar and supervisors of road construction projects. Within this oppressive nexus of public corruption and private greed, there is little hope for recovery or justice for Sukru and his family. *Paraja* raises critical questions about the systemic entrapment of tribal communities and their exploitation within state and institutional frameworks. Using the lens of the sociological theory of corruption, this research paper seeks to examine the interplay between corrupt public institutions and the victimization of tribal people as portrayed in the novel.

Key words: Tribal, exploitation, Goti (bonded labour), culture, Sahukar, poverty, oppression, marginality, Justice, etc.

Introduction

Corruption extends beyond the mere embezzlement of public funds or the consolidation of power at the expense of the poor and marginalized. It also encompasses the harassment, as well as physical and psychological abuse, inflicted upon innocent individuals. For marginalized communities particularly tribal groups and Dalits this often results in profound hopelessness and helplessness. Victims of such systemic corruption are left with few options: either endure ongoing suffering or resort to resistance, sometimes through protest. When the final recourse justice is denied, the conditions that arise encapsulate both the lived reality and mental anguish of those affected, often triggering acts of defiance.

Tribal communities typically reside in remote hamlets nestled within forests or at the base of hills, living in close harmony with nature. Traditionally dependent on forest produce and hunting, many have gradually transitioned to subsistence agriculture over time. However, the lands they cultivate often located on the fringes of forests are frequently designated as state property. As a result, these communities find themselves at the mercy of public officials for access and permission; it is within this bureaucratic dependency that the trap of corruption is laid, orchestrated by so-called civilized authorities whose machinery systematically exploits the vulnerable.

From a general moral standpoint, corruption is legally recognized as a crime within society, yet one must ask: does society possess any effective mechanisms to alleviate the burden it imposes? While we may envision the devastating effects of corruption, its true magnitude especially its impact on innocent lives remains immeasurable. Bureaucratic corruption, in particular, is widely acknowledged. Sudhir Chella Rajan, in "A Social Theory of Corruption: Notes from The Indian Subcontinent," observes that "paradigmatic manifestations of corruption are bribery and extortion," and he identifies its epicenter within the bureaucracy. For Rajan, corruption is not limited to monetary transactions; it also includes entrenched systems of caste, gender inequality, and class reproduction. According to 'The Economic Times' (2024), "Corruption is deceitful behavior that people in positions of power exhibit for personal gain. It is most commonly seen amongst government officials or managers." The publication further warns of its long-term social impact: "If gone unchecked, corruption will keep rising in the community, which will result in increased criminal activities and organized crimes." ('The Economic Times,' 2024).

Inge Amundsen also highlights the role of the state, stating: "Corruption is conventionally understood, and referred to, as the private wealth-seeking behavior of someone who represents the state and the public authority. It is the misuse of public goods by public officials, for private gains" (Amundsen, 05). Amundsen elaborates further, distinguishing the involved parties: "On the one side is the corrupt state official (at any level), on the other side is the corrupter, the supplier of bribes. There is a range of possible counterparts to a corrupt official. It can be the general public, any non-governmental and non-public individual, corporate and organizational, domestic and external" (Amundsen, 06). Together, these perspectives underscore the multifaceted nature of corruption, linking it not only to individual misconduct but to broader institutional and structural inequities.

The link between corruption and the marginalization of impoverished communities has been increasingly recognized. Jessie Bullock and Matthew Jenkins (2020) explored this connection and concluded that "some marginalised groups are more likely to encounter coercive attempts to extract bribes and other rent-seeking behaviour due to their restricted access to justice" (Bullock & Jenkins, 01). This observation is particularly relevant to the Indian context, where caste-based discrimination continues to affect backward and tribal communities.

In Gopinath Mohanty's 'Paraja', tribal characters are depicted as living in constant fear of the police and judicial system. As a result, they often prefer becoming 'goti' (bonded laborers) to pay off imposed penalties, rather than seeking legal recourse. This fear stems from generations of social exclusion and the persistent pressure from local officials who routinely extract bribes. The findings of Bullock and Jenkins support such portrayals, particularly in the case of Indigenous populations. According to them "there is some evidence that Indigenous peoples are especially exposed to corruption as a result of the often limited protection afforded to them by state institutions such as the courts, as well as because of the connection between natural resources and the economic livelihoods of some Indigenous communities" (Bullock & Jenkins, 12). Mohanty's portrayal of the Paraja tribe an Indigenous group in Odisha reflects this vulnerability. Though the novel is set around India's independence in 1945, the socio-economic condition of the tribe and their susceptibility to corrupt public machinery remain largely unchanged.

As noted by Aruna Basu Sarkar in a 'Times of India' report dated August 10, 2019, "Tribal communities in India have been vulnerable to exploitation and injustice. The exploitative attitude of petty officials, traders and money lenders has caused them to lead cursed lives" (Sarkar, 2019). This aligns closely with Mohanty's depiction of the Paraja tribe and underscores the enduring nature of systemic corruption and marginalization. In light of contemporary research, insightful novelists such as Gopinath Mohanty, Munshi Premchand, and Mahasweta Devi continue to expose the many layers of corruption that systematically victimize Indigenous tribal and Dalit communities. This raises a critical question: can corruption be burdensome to society? This perspective offers a unique lens through which to examine tribal and Dalit literature, especially in relation to existential struggles and systemic oppression.

'Paraja' by Gopinath Mohanty serves as a compelling model for analyzing the lives of tribal people caught within the inescapable labyrinth of corrupt public institutions. The protagonist, Sukru Jani, stands as a representative of millions of Indigenous inhabitants who have suffered under the weight of local bureaucratic corruption. As we examine the narrative, it becomes evident that both government and private entities operate within a layered hierarchy from local officials to state-level bureaucrats each contributing to the exploitation of tribal communities. Notably, even members from within the same social background are shown to engage in corrupt practices, exploiting their own people for personal gain.

Analyzing 'Paraja' through the framework of corruption discussed by Inge Amundsen, we can clearly identify various agents of corruption those whom Amundsen refers to as "corrupters" who exploit vulnerable tribal populations for illicit financial gain. In the novel, both the corrupt officials and their counterparts can be categorized into five distinct groups, each playing a role in the exploitation and systemic marginalization of the tribal characters.

1. Forest Officer & Revenue officer
2. Headman of Paraja community in the village and his associates as corrupter
3. Sahukar and supervisor of road Construction Company
4. Local agents as corrupter for influential people like Sahukar & supervisor
5. Police, Excise Duty Officials & officials related Judiciary

The narrative of 'Paraja' unfolds in the small hamlet of Sarsupdar, located in the Koraput district of Odisha. The events in the novel span roughly a year, beginning in the winter season. The protagonist, Sukru Jani, lives with his two sons, Mandia and Tikra, and his daughters, Jili and Bili. Having previously lost his wife to a tiger attack, Sukru moves forward with modest aspirations: securing a small piece of cultivable land and arranging the marriages of his children.

The village's political structure includes Nalka as the headman, Ribini the Revenue Inspector, Barik the village watchman, and the Forest Guard. When we examine the events of the novel, it becomes

clear that Sukru's misfortunes begin with his interaction with the Forest Guard a representative of the so-called "civilized society" who holds the authority to levy fines and taxes on villagers for grazing cattle in the forest, collecting honey without a license, or felling trees for timber or agriculture. Despite his official duties, the Forest Guard is frequently found idling by the stream, "sneakily looking 'bathing beauties under the waterfall.'" (Mohanty, 24)

As tribal communities begin transitioning from traditional practices to settled agriculture, some villagers offer bribes such as chickens, goats, or other valuables to gain the Forest Guard's favor in clearing forest land. Sukru, too, seeks such permission and offers "a couple of fatty chicken," for which he receives verbal approval. Accordingly, he begins clearing land near a plot already cultivated by two men from the Domb caste. However, the Forest Guard's real motive for granting permission lies in his growing desire for Sukru's daughter, Jili. To act on this, he sends a message through Kau Paraja, the 'goti' of the Naika. Sukru, however, firmly rejects the Forest Guard's immoral proposal, telling Kau, "Go and tell him that our Paraja women are not for sale" (Mohanty, 30). This act of defiance triggers a series of retaliatory events. A month later, the Forest Guard returns with another officer and confronts Sukru about the deforestation. As part of a scheme, a false case is registered against him. "Sukru Jani stood like a criminal in the dock and when he saw the officials writing, he felt as if the point of a knife was being dragged across his heart" (Mohanty, 35). He is fined an amount far beyond his means. The Naika warns him, "If you don't pay they will take you to court. They'll send you to jail and make you pay the fine. You understand what that means, don't you?" (Mohanty, 39).

In desperation, Sukru is presented with an option: become a 'goti' (bonded laborer) to Ram Bisoi, the 'Sahukar'. This proposal comes through Phaul Domb, a member of a caste historically seen as rivals to the Parajas. Reluctantly, Sukru and his younger son agree, marking the beginning of another cycle of exploitation and abuse. The novel thus powerfully reveals the systemic oppression of the poor, illiterate, and innocent at the hands of both public officials and private agents. It also illustrates how so-called "civilized" men like the Forest Guard exploit the vulnerability and simplicity of tribal life for their own gain.

Another key figure in 'Paraja' is the Revenue Officer, Garaja Sundara (Ribini), who acts as a mentor to the 'Sahukar', Ram Bisoi. The 'Sahukar' closely imitates the Ribini's lifestyle, as Mohanty notes: "Both of them smoked hemp and drank home-brewed liquor, and both were known to have weakness for women" (Mohanty, 195). Among the villagers, there is a belief that Garaja Sundara possesses occult powers, and some of which have transferred to the 'Sahukar'. Their path draw closer when they conspire to reclaim the land lost to the Kondh community after the government shuts down the 'Sahukar's liquor business. With Ribini's assistance, Ram Bisoi regains control of the land through illicit means.

Garaja Sundara later emerges as a pivotal figure in the illegal acquisition of Sukru Jani's land, particularly by manipulating court proceedings in favor of the 'Sahukar'. As the narrative describes, "After all Garaja Sundara, the revenue inspector, who could change black into white, was his friend" (Mohanty, 353). The character Sundara here epitomizes the archetype of the corrupt government official one who operates in the interest of financiers and wealthy landowners while exploiting poor farmers, even during times of natural hardship.

The village headman Naika is another complicit figure within the corrupt system, exploiting his own men of 'Paraja' Community. Eager to preserve his authority, he readily submits to the will of government officials and perpetuates fear within the village. This environment of intimidation forces many tribals into bonded labor. Young men who are compelled to become 'goti' to pay off loans taken for 'bride price' from the 'Sahukar'. Naika was always a mediator in all such loans for the men in village. Though Naika outwardly feigns sympathy for his fellow tribesmen, he secretly collaborates with exploiters. A loan of fifty rupees is taken from the 'Sahukar' for Sukru, involving legal deeds that Sukru

does not fully understand. The Naika, along with his associates Chalan and Barik, deliberately withholds a portion of the funds. Of the fifty rupees, only fifteen rupees handed over to the Forest Guard after the tribals “lay down prostrate before him”. While remaining money is kept by Naika and his accomplices without any one’s knowledge. The headman Naika is deeply entrenched in the corruption engineered by officials and influential businessmen, becoming a willing participant in the systematic exploitation of his own tribal people.

Ram Bisoi, the ‘Sahukar’ in ‘Paraja’, represents the entrenched merchant class that has historically collaborated with corrupt officials to exploit tribal communities. Known for offering bribes to government personnel in exchange for illicit favors, he thrives by dispossessing tribals especially his own ‘gotis’ of their land and resources, often with the backing of officials like Ribini. Ironically, oral accounts suggest that his ancestors once depended on the mercy of these very tribes. However, with time, they gained dominance, making the villagers reliant on them. His family originally ran two distilleries in the region, but after losing a legal battle concerning this business, Ram Bisoi shifted to money and grain lending.

The atmosphere in the hamlet is one of constant fear, as police and government officials harass the villagers routinely. Ram Bisoi benefits from this climate of intimidation. As Mohanty observes: “He had no business worries because the tribesmen never asked question and never tried to cheat him. They accepted his accounts completely and delivered to him whatever sum of money or quantity of grain he demanded in repayment” (Mohanty, 49). The ‘Sahukar’s reputation for brutality circulates orally among the villagers, reinforcing his power.

Sukru Jani gets trapped in the corrupt machinery when he and his son Tikra are forced to become ‘gotis’ to pay the unjust penalty imposed by the Forest Guard. Shortly after, his elder son Mandia is also forced into ‘goti’ servitude being apprehended by excise officials in an illegal liquor brewing case. Sukru’s daughter, Jili, must take up work at a road construction company to keep the family from starving. Meanwhile, the ‘Sahukar’, quietly sets his sights on Sukru’s fertile land, which had been pawned to him, and begins visiting the village under the pretext of this claim. Sahukar’s intentions surface when he sets his sights on Jili, eventually obtaining her through help of his local agent. Once their relationship becomes public, he marries her not out of love, but to legitimize his access and remain in the village. Eventually, he moves her into one of his mansions, where she lives among ‘gotis and servants. His interest in her quickly fades. “He was old, and his mind had grown dull with years of sensual indulgences. He needed his pleasures, but he had neither taste nor discrimination, and once the novelty had gone everything became tedious and meaningless to him” (Mohanty, 327). Though he feigns affection and gives her the illusion of responsibility, his actual motive is to seize Sukru’s land. Though Mandia and Tikra manage to gather the money to reclaim their land and freedom, the ‘Sahukar’ fabricates a new trap using a written deed signed by Sukru. When Sukru turns to the court in the search of justice, he is misled by the petition writer under the ‘Sahukar’s influence and given the wrong date for the hearing. Meanwhile, Ram Bisoi threatens the headman and witnesses into silence. On the scheduled day of court hearing, Sukru discovers that they have been deceived once again.

The ‘Sahukar’s role in the destruction of Sukru and his family is unparalleled. When Sukru and his son approach him in desperation to resolve the matter peacefully, he responds with brutal mockery: “Yes, Jili! And isn’t there another called Bili at home still? Bring her to me. I’ve taken the land, I’ve taken the one sister, and I shall take the another too. I shall take your wives; I shall drive you from court to court through the length of the country. I shall make you sweat out your lives as gotis and I shall rub your noses in the dust. If I don’t, my name is not Ramchandra Bisoi!” (Mohanty, 372). With no land, no dignity, and their family torn apart, Sukru and his sons are driven to the edge. This final humiliation ignites their rage, and when Ram Bisoi again unleashes abuse upon them, they respond with fatal violence, killing him. The act becomes both a tragic culmination of sustained systemic abuse and a desperate, volcanic assertion of their shattered humanity.

The road construction company contractors and supervisors in 'Paraja' serve as representatives of private capitalist forces that directly exploit the rural labor force. These agents of private capital often lure laborers from remote villages by offering the illusion of good wages and steady employment. Once they are recruited for the jobs, workers are required to live in temporary camps under challenging and often exploitative conditions. In the novel, after Sukru Jani and his sons are forced into 'goti' servitude by the 'Sahukar', his daughters Jili and Bili are left alone in their hut destitute, hungry, and dressed in rags. Upon learning that road contractors' agents are hiring laborers and offering advance payments, the sisters make the difficult decision to lock up their home and leave in search of work. Laborers from faraway villages also gather at the camp, where a Kutchee contractor oversees operations, assisted by a young supervisor who closely monitors daily activities. While the evenings bring moments of communal relaxation, with villagers enjoying themselves with 'Dungudunga' and festive gatherings, these times also mask a darker reality. As Mohanty depicts, these moments provide contractors and supervisors the opportunity to fulfill their "carnal desires with the women they want." Rami, a laborer from Champi village, plays a central role in facilitating such encounters, actively assisting the supervisor in meeting his sexual demands. Bili soon follows the same path as Jili, and both sisters begin receiving gifts from the supervisor and other young men in exchange for sexual favors. "The gifts are in the form of coins, saris, cakes of perfumed soap, scented oil, beads and rings." Though Gopinath Mohanty notes that "questions about morality or sexuality were of no importance there given the situation of the labour camp," the circumstances reveal a grim truth: extreme poverty and desperation render these young tribal women vulnerable to exploitation. From another perspective, the labor camp reflects a stark imbalance of power, where needy, impoverished women tragically submit to the lust of men in positions of authority simply to meet their basic daily needs. Later in the novel, when Sukru attempts to bring his daughters back home, the supervisors offer him a job in an attempt to retain the girls in the camp an act that further underscores their exploitative intentions.

Within 'Paraja', five individuals emerge as prominent "corrupters" agents who, though working for meager personal gain, play significant roles in the exploitation of their fellow villagers. These figures include Barik, the village watchman; his daughter Diptomani; Kau Paraja, the 'goti' of the Naika; Madhu Ghasi; and Rami from Champi village. Their skills in exploiting the tribal community's greatest vulnerabilities: 'poverty, hunger, and the daily struggle for survival' links them in deep familiarity with their victims.

The first corrupter, Barik, is consistently complicit with the Naika in misleading Sukru. His involvement in turning Sukru and his sons into 'gotis' for the 'Sahukar' is direct and deliberate. As the village watchman, he arranges visits for government officials and members of the capitalist elite, always hoping for favors or bribes in return. When Sukru mortgages his land for fifty scores to the 'Sahukar', Barik is among those who split the amount with Naika and others, showing no sympathy for Sukru, who is ultimately ruined.

The second corrupter, Kau Paraja, acts strictly under the Naika's direction. Early in the novel, he is sent by the Forest Guard to convey a disturbing proposal to Sukru: to send his daughter Jili to the Guard. Sukru's outright rejection of this proposition marks the beginning of his family's prolonged suffering. Later, Kau Paraja befriends Jili and Bili, expressing a desire to marry one of them during their desperate times. But upon discovering Jili's involvement with the 'Sahukar', he reacts bitterly, provoking Sukru against his daughter.

The third corrupter, Diptomani Barik's daughter – is instrumental in sending Jili and Bili to the road construction camp. "Diptimony, herself was the village gossip, a frequent visitor in every home" (Mohanty, 202). Knowing well the exploitative culture of the camp, she nevertheless tempts the girls with tales of ease and enjoyment. As Mohanty writes: "And life in the camp would be one long holiday, with dancing and music and liquor enough to drown in! And the girls would have young men in

abundance to pay them court" (Mohanty, 203). Under this illusion, Jili and Bili are drawn into the camp, unaware that their sexual involvement with supervisors amounts to systemic exploitation.

The fourth corrupter, Rami from Champi village, and the fifth, Madhu Ghasi, both act as trusted agents of their superiors. Rami maintains a close alliance with the young supervisor at the labor camp as it was her nature to stay close to officials. "Rami from Champi village was famous for her skills, and in the past she had assisted many officials of high rank" (Mohanty, 220). Her as usual approach involves gaining the trust of innocent, vulnerable and needy young women, by offering small gifts from the supervisor and seemingly creating a friendly environment; one that gradually pushes them towards exploitation and submission.

Madhu Ghasi plays a similar role within the village, mirroring these tactics in a more localized setting. Employed by Ramchandra Bisoi, the 'Sahukar', he facilitates the 'Sahukar's access to Jili. When Ram Bisoi arrives in Sarsupdar and takes an interest in her, Madhu is the one who succeeds in bringing her to him for just a few 'annas' and minor personal favors. These five corrupters though not powerful themselves function as vital links in the chain of systemic exploitation. Driven by greed and opportunism, their actions, shows a complete lack of moral conscience; are marked by an absence of moral consideration; revealing how even the most marginalized individual can help sustain cycle of corruption for the sake of smallest personal gains.

The role of the police and the structured judiciary in 'Paraja' is central to understanding the chain of systemic corruption that victimizes the tribal population. For the innocent tribals, the police represent a source of fear and intimidation, and coercing them through threats is depicted as disturbingly effortless. Throughout the novel, police are shown siding with powerful officials and capitalist interests, never with the oppressed. As the narrator observes, "the occupants of the huts live in perpetual terror as the officials and the police constantly harass them." This fear manifests in several ways. When Mandia is caught selling illicit liquor, an excise officer imposes a severe penalty on him. With no means to pay, he is compelled to become a 'goti' to the 'Sahukar', thus continuing the cycle of exploitation. Here, the police and excise authorities are not agents of justice but enforcers of systemic subjugation.

Justice, often regarded as the final refuge for the wronged, is equally inaccessible. Though courts are described as temples of justice, for the tribals they are distant, incomprehensible spaces filled with fear and deception. Sukru, having repaid the agreed amount to reclaim his land and free his sons, finds the 'Sahukar' reneging on his promise by citing a binding deed. Left with no other recourse, Sukru and his sons approach the district court.

They meet a petition writer, who assures them of success and persuades them to hire him as their lawyer. Sukru and his sons are charged at every stage of the legal process. The petition writer, along with his associate Pujari, manipulates their trust and fills them with false hope. Meanwhile, the 'Sahukar', having engaged a proper lawyer, begins intimidating potential witnesses members of the Paraja tribe into silence.

In a calculated move, the petition writer and Pujari deceive Sukru by giving him the wrong date for the next court hearing. As Mohanty writes, "So remember the date...get it by heart. The next date of hearing falls on the sixth Tuesday from today. Count five Tuesday in between and come on Tuesday following" (Mohanty, 357). When Sukru and his sons return to court on the appointed day, they are shocked to discover that the case has already been closed in favor of the 'Sahukar', due to their absence and lack of witness representation.

Thus, every pillar of public institution police, judiciary, and bureaucracy reveals itself to be part of a deeply corrupt structure. Sukru loses everything, not due to a lack of effort, but because of systemic manipulation and betrayal at every turn. Denied justice and stripped of all hope, Sukru and his son, in

a moment of unbearable frustration and despair, kill the 'Sahukar' the man they hold responsible for their devastation. The ending of 'Paraja' resonates with the sobering observation made in 'The Economic Times' (2024) in its article on the societal cost of corruption: "Social costs are concerned with the citizens losing the trust in their government." The novel concludes with this very loss of trust. Sukru and his family, having exhausted every avenue of legal and institutional recourse, find justice unreachable. Their final act of violence is not only personal but symbolic of a collective breakdown in faith in governance and public justice systems.

Conclusion

The life of Sukru Jani, an innocent tribal man, is marked by relentless hardship and suffering, primarily caused by the corrupt government machinery and influential private capitalists. While 'Paraja' richly portrays the cultural depth and traditions of the Paraja community, it also starkly reveals the terrifying reality of villagers' encounters with so-called "civilized" yet morally bankrupt officials. Throughout the novel, five distinct categories of the corrupt, the corrupters, and their counterparts are clearly identifiable, each operating a trap that targets the vulnerable. The novel's depiction of village social structures and regional political dynamics led translator B. K. Das to characterize 'Paraja' as both a sociological and anthropological document. Despite its pessimistic tone, the novel powerfully communicates themes of existence, innocence, human endurance, and the will to resist a hostile world. The murder of the 'Sahukar' by Sukru and his son at the novel's climax is more than an act of desperation it is the eruption of a long-silenced subaltern voice. It acts as an eye-opener, urging the government to address the urgent needs of tribal communities and to critically monitor the exploitative interactions between innocent tribals and corrupt public officials.

Importantly, 'Paraja' is not a tale of revenge. Rather, it delves deeply into the lived realities of the Paraja community, capturing both the beauty of their traditions and the brutality of their exploitation. The novel exposes how both public and private institutions systematically extort money from villagers, often pushing them to the brink of ruin. In remote villages like Sarsupdar, as depicted in the narrative, manipulation of human resources reaches an alarming peak. Those in positions of authority whether public officials or wealthy capitalists are ironically portrayed as the "civilized," yet they are the principal agents of corruption and exploitation. Their presence casts a long shadow over the village, shaking its foundations and disrupting its social fabric. While Sukru's final act of violence cannot be justified, the novel makes it clear that the corrupt systems in place created a desperate and inescapable situation. The moral and social burden of these so-called civilized exploiters permeates the narrative, emphasizing the urgent need for structural reform and justice for India's tribal communities.

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